

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method of conducting a transaction over an open network for a ~~client~~ customer comprising the steps of:

initiating a transaction session by validating a ~~client~~ customer identity through a ~~client~~ customer identification process;

assigning an anonymous personal purchasing identification number to the ~~client~~ customer corresponding to the transaction session, which personal purchasing identification number is used for subsequent transactions by on behalf of the ~~client~~ customer;

presenting the anonymous personal purchasing identification number as the sole identification of the ~~client~~ customer through a proxy to permit the ~~client~~ customer to access transaction vendors anonymously via the proxy over the open network;

entering into a transaction requiring payment to a transaction vendor via the anonymous personal purchasing identification number;

transmitting payment for the transaction from the ~~client~~ customer to the proxy; and  
confirming payment to the vendor from the proxy for the transaction.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1 wherein said step of transmitting payment for the transaction utilizes a credit card having corresponding credit card information issued to the proxy for a limited period of time so that the exposure of the credit card information over the open network is limited in time.

3. (Original Claim) The method of Claim 2 wherein said limited period of time during which the credit card can be used for purchases over the open network is one day.

4. (Original Claim) The method of Claim 2 wherein said personal purchasing identification number is utilized over the open network only for a limited period.

5. (Original Claim) The method of Claim 4 wherein said limited period is a period of time for validity of said personal purchasing identification number, said period of time being one day.
6. (Original Claim) The method of Claim 4 wherein said limited period corresponds to a predetermined number of uses of said personal purchasing identification number.
7. (Original Claim) The method of Claim 6 wherein said predetermined number of uses for which said personal purchasing identification number is valid is one transaction.
8. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 4 wherein said step of initiating a transaction session involves at least one of password protection, biometric input protection and smart card input/output protection.
9. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 4 wherein said proxy is a server connected to other servers to validate ~~client~~ customer information and identification, maintain account information, validate and track transactions, and validate vendors of transactions.
10. (Original Claim) The method of Claim 9 wherein one of said other servers is a credit card management server on which is stored said credit card information, said credit card management server is protected by at least one firewall engine and access from outside said process through a ~~client~~ customer intruder alert and detection engine.
11. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9 wherein communications between said ~~client~~ customer and said proxy server ~~is~~ are encrypted.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1 wherein said transaction involves the purchase of goods, said method further comprising the steps of:

shipping of said goods by said vendor to a courier for delivery of said goods to said ~~client~~ customer;

informing said courier of a delivery address corresponding to said personal purchasing identification number by said proxy; and

delivering said goods to said ~~client~~ customer by said courier.

13. (Currently Amended) A method of providing an anonymous transaction for a ~~client~~ customer over the Internet comprising the steps of:

interposing a secure anonymous transaction engine between said ~~client~~ customer and said Internet for said ~~client~~ customer to access the Internet;

validating the identity of said ~~client~~ customer;

assigning an anonymous personal purchasing identification number to said ~~client~~ customer;

using a proxy server to permit said ~~client~~ customer to browse the Internet via said proxy server through the identity of said anonymous personal purchasing identification number;

maintaining ~~client~~ customer information, including identity information and credit card information on a credit card management server within said secure anonymous transaction engine;

entering into a transaction requiring a payment with a transaction vendor by said proxy server using said anonymous personal purchasing identification number, wherein the anonymous personal purchasing identification number serves as the sole identification of the ~~client~~ customer for all transactions outside of the proxy server without identifying personal information of the ~~client~~ customer;

transmitting payment for the transaction from the ~~client~~ customer to the secure anonymous transaction engine; and

confirming payment to the vendor from the secure anonymous transaction engine for the transaction.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 13 wherein said step of validating the identity of said ~~client~~ customer utilizes at least one of password protection, biometric input protection and smart card input/output protection.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 13 wherein said step of transmitting payment for the transaction utilizes a credit card having corresponding credit card information issued to the secure anonymous transaction engine for a limited period of time so that the exposure of the credit card information over the open network is limited in time.

16. (Original Claim) The method of Claim 15 wherein the use of said personal purchasing identification number is limited by at least one of time or number of uses.

17. (Original Claim) The method of Claim 16 wherein the valid use of said personal purchasing identification number is limited to a time period of approximately one day.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 16 wherein said credit card management server is protected from access from outside the secure anonymous transaction engine by at least one firewall engine and through a ~~client~~ customer intruder alert and detection engine.

19. (Currently Amended) A secure anonymous transaction system for permitting a ~~client~~ customer to communicate with a vendor over the Internet without exposing the ~~client's~~ customer's identity or the ~~client's~~ customer's financial information comprising:

a proxy server through which said ~~client~~ customer can communicate over the Internet without divulging the identity of the ~~client~~ customer, said proxy server creating an anonymous personal purchasing identification number for the ~~client~~ customer for use as the sole identification of the ~~client~~ customer for subsequent transactions on behalf of the ~~client~~ customer over the Internet, said proxy server maintaining a secure communications environment with the ~~client~~ customer that ensures the identity of the ~~client~~ customer remains anonymous outside of the proxy server, said

proxy server being used to pay for any transactions requiring payment entered into on behalf of the customer;

a virus protection engine to detect and prevent the entry of viruses and similar devices into said secure anonymous transaction system;

a firewall to limit access into the secure anonymous transaction system; and

data encryption for encrypting communications between the ~~client~~ customer and the proxy server.

20. (Currently Amended) The secure anonymous transaction system of Claim 19 further comprising:

a ~~client~~ customer validity engine to validate the identity of the ~~client~~ customer before permitting access of said ~~client~~ customer into said secure anonymous transaction system;

a personal purchasing identification management engine to assign a personal purchasing identification number to said ~~client~~ customer upon being validated to permit communication over the Internet by said proxy server without divulging the identity of said ~~client~~ customer; and

an audit trail engine to track transactions for said ~~client~~ customer within said secure anonymous transaction system without providing ~~client~~ customer information outside the secure anonymous transaction system.

21. (Original Claim) The secure anonymous transaction system of Claim 20 wherein the personal purchasing identification number assigned by said personal purchasing identification management engine has a limited duration for validity.

22. (Original Claim) The secure anonymous transaction system of Claim 20 wherein said audit trail engine provides user trend information for utilization within said secure anonymous transaction system.

23. (Currently Amended) The secure anonymous transaction system of Claim 20 further comprising:

a credit card management server on which is stored credit card information of said client customer, said credit card management server providing a proxy credit card number to said vendor upon the entry of a commercial transaction on behalf of said client customer.

24. (Original Claim) The secure anonymous transaction system of Claim 23 wherein said proxy credit card number has a limited validity period.

25. (Currently Amended) A secure anonymous transaction system for permitting a client customer to communicate with a vendor over the Internet without exposing the client's customer's identity or the client's customer's financial information comprising:

a proxy server through which said client customer can communicate over the Internet without divulging the identity of the client customer, said proxy server creating an anonymous personal purchasing identification number for the client customer for use as the sole identification of the client customer for subsequent transactions on behalf of the client customer over the Internet, said proxy server maintaining a secure communications environment with the client customer that ensures the identity of the client customer remains anonymous outside of the proxy server;

a client customer validity engine to validate the identity of the client customer before permitting access of said client customer into said secure anonymous transaction system;

a personal purchasing identification management engine to assign a personal purchasing identification number to said client customer upon being validated to permit communication over the Internet by said proxy server without divulging the identity of said client customer; and

a credit card management engine on which is stored credit card information of said client customer, said credit card management engine providing a proxy credit card number to said vendor upon the entry of a commercial transaction on behalf of said client customer for payment of the commercial transaction.

26. (Original Claim) The secure anonymous transaction system of Claim 25 further comprising:  
a virus protection engine to detect and prevent the entry of viruses and similar devices into said secure anonymous transaction system; and  
a firewall to limit access into the secure anonymous transaction system.
27. (Currently Amended) The secure anonymous transaction system of Claim 26 further comprising:  
an audit trail engine to track transactions for said ~~client~~ customer within said secure anonymous transaction system without providing ~~client~~ customer information outside the secure anonymous transaction system.
28. (Currently Amended) The secure anonymous transaction system of Claim 26 wherein communications between said ~~client~~ customer and said secure anonymous transaction system are encrypted by data encryption software.
29. (Original Claim) The secure anonymous transaction system of Claim 25 wherein the personal purchasing identification number assigned by said personal purchasing identification management engine has a limited duration for validity, said proxy credit card number also having a limited validity period.
30. (Currently Amended) The secure anonymous transaction system of Claim 25 further comprising:  
a shipping center for receiving goods from said vendor shipped to said personal purchasing identification number, said shipping center being operable to direct said goods to said ~~client~~ customer so that said ~~client~~ customer remains anonymous to said vendor.